

# Mexican Train

<https://www.dominorules.com/mexican-train>

**Number of players/domino set:** 2 to 4 players using a double-9 set; 2 to 8 players using a double-12 set; and 9-12 players, or more, using a double-15 or 18 set. Adaptations can be easily made should your players/sets not exactly fit this guideline. Conventional dominoes with pips (dots) or Number Dominoes™ can be used.

**Additional equipment:** A score sheet and one train marker per player.

**Object of the game:** To rid your hand of as many dominoes as possible and to be the first to do this. The other players then must total the pips or numbers remaining in their hands and keep a running total for their score. The lowest score wins. To start, pull out the 12-12 (double-12) if playing with a double-12 set (or the 9-9 if playing with a double-9 set, 15-15 for a double-15 set, 18-18 for a double 18 set) from the deck. This domino is called the "engine" and will be the starter domino for this game. Place the engine in the center of the table or in the centerpiece. Shuffle the remaining dominoes face down. Number of tiles drawn using a double 12 set: 2 players - 16 tiles each; 3 players - 15; 4 players - 14; 5 players - 12; 6 players - 11; 7 players - 10; 8 players - 9. Additional players can play by adjusting this numerical arrangement to fit. For double-9, 15 or 18 sets, adjustments can be made so that the number of tiles drawn in each player's hand and the bone pile are reasonable. This is not critical to the game and it will balance itself as the game is played. The remaining tiles are set aside in "bone piles" to be drawn as needed in the game. The players then organize the tiles in their hands in a playable progression beginning with the same denomination number as the engine. The ends of the tiles in your hand must match and form a line to be ready to play onto the engine as your "personal train" after the game starts (example: 12-5, 5-7, 7-8, 8-11 and so on). When you are no longer able to line up your tiles in a matching series, the leftover tiles are considered your "extras" and will be used on the "Mexican Train" or on other players' "personal trains" during the game. If you do not draw a domino with a playable end that matches the engine tile, you can begin the line-up in your hand with any domino that will make up the longest line of end-matching tiles and the fewest "extras" possible. Thus, you will be ready when an opportunity arises for all or some part of that line-up to become playable somewhere as the game progresses. To begin, choose a player at random to play first and then rotate the starters clockwise thereafter. The starter player must begin by either playing a matching tile from the "line-up" in his hand onto the engine in a location that will point toward him, thereby beginning his "personal train," or by playing one of his "extra" dominoes to be the first of the Mexican Train. This Mexican Train is a line of "end-matching" dominoes that can run around the edge of the table or be stacked at some side space convenient to all players. The Mexican Train, or one's own "personal train", or another player's "personal train" (when marked) are the three options for playing one's dominoes to rid themselves of their tiles.

The Mexican Train starts at anytime with the first tile played by any player who so chooses to play a domino from his "extras". The Mexican Train must be a domino that has one end that is the same denomination as the engine in the center. The Mexican Train is begun and is played in an area out-of-the-way from the center playing area.

The Mexican Train then grows as others play on it, but it can only be played on from the tail end, opposite the end that matches the engine's denomination.

The "personal trains" are spokes that grow outward from the engine/centerpiece and appear as spokes on a hub. Special centerpieces/hubs are available to conveniently hold the engine, the train markers, and the beginning dominoes of the "personal trains."

The number of players participating determines the number of spokes or "personal trains" coming out from the engine/centerpiece. Spokes can be squeezed in between if more than 8 players are involved, or as needed if double-15s or 18s are used. After the starter has played, the next player to the left does likewise by playing on or beginning the Mexican Train; or by beginning his own "personal train," which leads off from the engine towards him; or by playing on another player's "personal train" if it has a marker on it.

It is always wise to start the Mexican Train as soon as possible as it gives more places to play. This means that you have at least two dominoes in your hand that match the engine and you can use one to start your "personal train" and one to start the Mexican Train.

When a player cannot play on his own "personal train" or the Mexican Train, he must draw one tile and try to play it immediately. If unable to play anywhere, the player passes and must put a marker on the end tile of his "personal train" (even if it has not been started, he places a marker next to the engine where his train is intended to begin), marking it so that others can play indefinitely on his marked train until he can play on it at which time he removes the marker. To remove a marker from one's "personal train", that player must play only on his "personal train" when it becomes possible and then he removes the marker. Playing on the Mexican Train or some other player's train does not make him eligible to remove his marker.

If a player plays a double (a tile with the identical denomination on both ends) it is placed sideways and he must then play a second domino perpendicular onto the double or onto some other eligible train. If he plays a double and has no playable follow-up domino to play, he must draw and if he draws a playable domino he can play it on the double or on any eligible train. If he doesn't draw a playable tile, he must pass and place a marker on his personal train. After a double is played and that player has completed his turn and if he has left a double not played upon, all trains become unplayable until the next players can play onto that double. If players cannot play a tile on the double tile, they must draw once and determine if they can play. If they are still unable to play on the double, they pass and must place a marker on their "personal train". Once a tile has been played on the double tile, then everyone can resume play on his or her "personal train", or anyone's train that has a marker on it, or the Mexican Train and the game resumes as normal. A player can play two doubles consecutively onto two different trains if that player is able to play an additional third tile from his hand (without drawing) onto one of those double tiles. This means that a player could play 3 tiles in one turn. The next player must play a tile on the open double tile, or draw and play on it, or if he doesn't draw a playable tile, he passes and puts a marker on his personal train. All players must always play when possible even if they have to play a tile out of their train line-up in their hand (which is disrupting, but mandatory). When any player is left with just one tile in his hand, he must give notice to the other players by tapping his final tile on the table. This allows other players a chance to lower their score by ridding themselves of a higher numbered tile on their next turn.

**General rules:** Players must always play if they have an eligible tile. They cannot at any time hold back and pass and/or draw for some strategic reason. If there are no more tiles in the bone pile, a player must pass if he does not hold a playable tile, and then place a marker on his train. The game is over when one player has dominoed (played his final tile) or when the game is blocked because no one holds a playable tile and all of the tiles in the bone yard have been drawn and everyone passes and the game is totally stalled. It is possible for a game to end by someone playing a double or two doubles as his last play and without a follow-up domino. When any player has played his last domino no matter if it normally requires a follow-up, the game is over and no other players can play. Then, all players must count the number of pips or numbers on the tiles left in their hands (0, in the case of the player who has dominoed), and give that number to the scorekeeper. As soon as the first round is completed, the next game begins by pulling out the 11-11 if playing with a double-12 set, or 8-8 if playing with a double-9 set, or 14-14 with a double-15 set, or 18-18 with a double-18 set. The starter tile is placed in the middle of the table as the engine, and

the rest of the deck is shuffled before drawing hands. All "personal trains" and the Mexican Train must be started with this same numbered tile as the new, center engine tile. Each new game thereafter should begin with the next-lowest double being played as the engine, with the 0-0 tile being the final engine for the last game. The player with the lowest total score after all the games have been played is the winner.

**Object of the game:** To rid your hand of as many dominoes as possible and to be the first to do this. The other players then must total the points or pips remaining in their hands and keep a running total for their score. The lowest score wins.